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Inside Labor

Puerto Rico Reds Active

By VICTOR RIESEL

WASHINGTON, D. C. — Peking's secret agents are scouring Puerto Rico for recruits to come to the Communist Chinese mainland. They would go not only for guerrilla training but for a series of personal appearances throughout China and Southeast Asia to denounce the U. S. and melodramatically accuse the FBI and CIA of being colonial "terrorist" forces.

One tiny Puerto Rican contingent has already been flown over by the Peking apparatus. True, they are only a few, but they are the first, and Peking is satisfied that it has made a heavy propaganda profit on its investment. There have been banner waving airport crowds to greet the visitors, demonstrations at which huge throngs were gathered to cheer their denunciations of the U. S. as a murderous nation, and international broadcasts by the Peking radio calling for Puerto Rican "freedom from American imperialism."

The Chinese Communists never fritter away hard currency, nor do they waste the moments of their 70-year-old national leader, Mao Tse-tung. So this project must have high priority, for Mao did give the visiting Puerto Ricans an audience replete with photographers and the promise of a long, comfortable tour.

This plush trip will take the Puerto Rican group through South China and finally into North Vietnam for broadcasts against our allies and our own forces in South Viet Nam.

At the head of the Puerto Rican band is a fiery couple who give the impression that Castro-like troops already are in the mountain ridges at El Yunque awaiting the chance to attack U. S. forces and seize

the island, as the bearded ones took Cuba five years ago. To us, on this side of the world, this may have a musical comedy touch. But those Asians listening to the histrionic couple—who identify themselves as Marta Sanchez Olmeda and Narciso Rabell Martinez—got a vivid impression of civil war, captured towns and street fighting in Puerto Rico.

The gory analogy of such an embattled Puerto Rico with the Saigon - Washington alliance which is fighting the Viet Cong is not lost on the tens of thou-

sands of Chinese and Vietnamese who are herded into meetings to hear Marta Sanchez and Narciso Rabell.

Although the actual date of their departure from Puerto Rico for Peking via Cuba is not clear, it is certain they were in the Chinese Communist capital as recently as March 20. That day they addressed a mass rally arranged by their hosts, the All-China Students' Federation.

The visiting couple were the star speakers and the lady is apparently the more fiery of the two. After the thousands finished cheering her introduction, she took the mike and opened her speech.

"Good evening, comrades! In the name of the University Federation for Independence (of Puerto Rico) I want to express my affectionate and revolutionary greeting and at the same time thank the great president Mao Tse-tung for the honor he granted us in receiving us and holding an amiable chat with us. It is an honor for me to talk to you and mark a date of heroic meaning and remembrance for all the people of Puerto Rico."

She harangued the crowd with talk of past revolts on the island and with the promise of future upheavals. She spoke with regret of the failure of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party to kill then president Harry Truman and bemoaned the fact that they "were only able to wound a congressman."

After the mass meeting, the couple's host, Chang Yin An, vice president of the All-China Students' Federation, hailed them as anti-U. S. heroes and suggested they hand out autographs, accept souvenirs and join in the singing of Communist and Puerto Rican folk songs.

The Latin American section of the Peking foreign office is reported to have considered this a significant breakthrough and now has its agents searching for additional recruits—but this time from inside Puerto Rican labor unions. The best Peking contacts have been made by the Cubans who, of course, are less conspicuous on the island. The Castro apparatus already has some support and even succeeded in convincing a few unionists to go to a Communist labor parley in Colombia. The same men were also invited to Havana.

At the same time, there is constant proselytizing on the island by a clandestine Communist movement which has some 400 to 500 members. Numerically this is just about enough to seize a bank of telephone booths. But to interpret this development merely in terms of numbers is political naivete. The Chinese Communist recruiting is concentrating on student and labor circles in an effort to find even a handful of "shock forces" who are willing to give their whole lives, as some Nationalists already have done, for the "cause."

It would take only a few hundred rioters to force counter-police or military action. And the first shot would be heard around the Communist world. The U. S. would be accused of shooting down university youngsters and labor men in an imperialist effort to control their colony. The Communists would make it look like a Khartoum or a Calcutta.

So I offer this report to prove that any such bloody developments will be contrived and rehearsed. They will not be spontaneous nor will they reflect the hearts and loyalty of the people of Puerto Rico.

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